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The Civilities of Leadership

Attitudes, Behaviors, Tools, and Skills

Civility is hardly the only way to live, but it is the only way that is worthwhile.

Peck (1993, p. 54)

Genuine civilities convey a sense of possibilities—"We can do it."

Anonymous

You are punished if you write to the authorities on behalf of another prisoner—say a sick man who is not getting any medical attention. The authorities say, "Look, your letters don't help." And they are logically right. But there exists another, inner logic: the prisoner who writes such a letter may not save his neighbor in the next cell, but he saves his soul.

Shcharansky (1986, p. 38)

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Most of the behaviors discussed in this chapter are simple kindnesses or civilities that are not dramatic or even visible to many people. But at times it takes great courage to exercise one's civil rights as Anatoli Shcharansky describes in the third opening quote. In February 1986, Shcharansky—Soviet Jew, dissident, and accused American spy—was released from a Soviet prison to Israel, and freedom, after nine years in custody. His weight had varied from 81 to 165 pounds. He had become not only a powerful voice of dissent in the Soviet Union but also a bridge between Soviet Jewry and the rest of the human rights movement. Writing a letter on behalf of another person, an act of conviction and courage, can make a tremendous difference for the letter writer even if it doesn't bring about a change in the behavior of the oppressor. The Shcharansky quote sounds as if it could have been written by Mohandas Gandhi, Hindu religious leader and social reformer.

Occasionally we hear of an educational leader who rises above bureaucratic structure to stand up for a teacher, colleague, or student to take a stand on an important moral issue. A crusty veteran superintendent from the state of New York shared with me his views on this matter:

If you aren't willing to go out on a limb for someone who has been treated unfairly, you don't have any right to have the position you have. In fact, this is the difference between a leader and a manager. A real leader is willing to risk doing what is right no matter what the consequences are.

When manners and civilities are invoked simply to get the approval of others, they are self-serving and as such usually don't have the ring of truth, authenticity, and integrity. When manners and politeness are used in this way, they communicate the leader's desire to avoid pain, and yet maintaining the health of a person or organization often involves a good deal of pain (Peck, 1993). To work through the pain in the interest of students and colleagues who are at risk is to use one's biases for a moral cause. William Buckley (1982) underscores how bias can be a kind of advantage in such situations: "Ken Galbraith

and I have in common what strikes some as a disadvantage, but isn't: namely our plainspoken bias which gives a harnessing energy to our work" (p. 239). Buckley, a conservative, and Galbraith, a liberal, respect each other's commitments.

THE TABLE MANNERS OF LEADERSHIP

When I was a child I was asked to set the table before dinner. My immediate inclination was to resist the request, but I discovered with time that there was a sense of security and order in the task—something that gave me the feeling that I was making an important contribution to the dinner hour.

What I didn't realize at the time was that this "table manner" was one of several that set the stage for good conversation among family members. (How foreign this sounds to a generation that has learned to place dinner on a TV tray and head for the family room.) The dinner hour was a time to exchange ideas and opinions, a time to converse and listen. In short, it was a time to learn from each other—a time to sharpen thinking, speaking, and listening skills.

I recently asked a third-grade teacher what she had accomplished with her class this year. Her response was quite remarkable:

One of the main things that I gave attention to this year was table manners in the cafeteria. Most of the students in my class had not learned the most elementary manners while eating—things like, how to hold their eating utensils, how to talk without yelling and how to listen to each other. I knew that if they didn't learn these things along the way that they would get in high school and not know how to behave in restaurants and other similar places. I found that once the students practiced these table manners that they actually found them both useful and enjoyable.

This teacher and my parents were beginning to develop what Roland Nelson, a former university president and leadership author, calls "the table manners of leadership" (Brubaker,

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2004, p. 109). By this he means those small behaviors that facilitate an exchange of information and feelings that leads to learning and better relationships. Stated another way, the table manners of leadership are not used to manipulate people as objects within a bureaucratic hierarchy (Peck, 1993). Rather, they are used to create environments where persons can learn from each other in lateral relationships with each other. Table manners of leadership are skills and tools that let others know that you value your relationships with them—an attitude that others respect. The following snapshot, as with other snapshots throughout this book, takes you, the reader, to school and school-system locations in order to give you a backstage view of the author's ideas in action. These locations are the backdrop or context in which educational leaders make decisions on the firing line. The first snapshot illustrates the role of a secretary in creating a school culture that doesn't invite people into the school. The second snapshot illustrates how a secretary with good table manners of leadership invites persons into the school.

Snapshot 1.1 My First Encounter in an Elementary School

It was a beautiful spring day when I first experienced Raven Elementary School. I immediately noticed how well kept the school's grounds were. I could smell the wild onions from the first grass cutting of the year. And, there were beds of spring flowers just beginning to bloom. As I approached the main entrance I saw an attractive welcoming sign with its greeting in English and Spanish.

As I entered the main office, I saw a small group of adults, teachers and assistants, gathered around the secretary's desk. I stood there for several minutes watching the secretary sell clothes and beauty products (what I later learned was a side-business, with most of her products displayed in the teachers' lounge).

When the secretary approached me, there was no greeting of any kind, simply a quizzical "Yes?" I explained that I needed information on this particular magnet school and was surprised when she did not give me any written literature on Raven Elementary School. In fact, I was left with the feeling that the secretary didn't want her world interrupted. I also noticed that she had poor English: "The principal usually don't come in this early as she is out with the buses."

Snapshot 1.2 My Second Encounter in the School

My child didn't get into our first choice of magnet schools and so I returned once again to Raven Elementary School, a school with a math/science emphasis. The flowers I saw earlier in the spring were now in full bloom and the school grounds were immaculate.

I was surprised on entering the front office to be greeted by a newly hired secretary: "Good morning! Welcome to our school. I'm Miss Bradburn, the school secretary. How may I help you?" I explained that our child wanted to register as a student in the school. Miss Bradburn turned to her well-organized file cabinet, gave me some photocopied handouts, and told me what I needed to do in order to register our child. I immediately noticed Miss Bradburn's professionalism and good English—in contrast to that of the earlier secretary.

Miss Bradburn left me with the impression that she enjoyed her job, had pride in Raven Elementary School, and found my child and me to be special people deserving of attention.

Entrance and Exit Rituals

Entrance and exit rituals are important in any setting (see Appendix I for an entrance and exit ritual inventory). The preceding snapshots, or *scenes* in the language of Goffman (1959), vividly illustrate differences in two individuals' entrance ritual performances and the settings in which such performances took place. One of the adages in the luxury hotel business is that "if you manage the first and last impressions of a guest properly, then you'll have a happy guest" (Kleinfield, 1989, p. 36). Since both snapshots were located in the same school or physical setting, the school grounds were a real plus for they sent the message that administrators cared enough about this school and its occupants to have inviting lawns and flowers as well as a well-kept building exterior. Furthermore, the welcome sign in both English and Spanish demonstrated inclusion.

The secretary in the first snapshot had a conflict of interest or divided loyalty between her work at school and her private business. She *set the stage* for the visiting parent with mixed

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signals, thus conveying the message that the core values of the school itself were ambiguous. The immediate question that comes to mind is, "Why did the principal of Raven Elementary School allow this to happen?" (When bringing this snapshot to the attention of principals I have talked to in leadership seminars across the nation, the following is a summary of their reactions:

Some school systems have policies that clearly state that school employees can't engage in such sales practices, others don't. The enforcement of such policies in schools that have them is often uneven and depends on the principal and those in central office who supervise the principal.

Unfortunately, the secretary, in part because of her divided interests, was not well organized and didn't have the printed information requested by the visitor. Her poor English was an inadvertent *misrepresentation* of educational professionalism. In conclusion, the secretary was what Goffman called a *performance risk*.

The second secretary used *dramatic realization* for her authentic performance, expressed during the interaction as what she wished to convey—a positive invitation to the school, its magnet program, and the educators in the school. By giving her timely, complete, and undivided attention to the visitor interested in this magnet school, Miss Bradburn exhibited special attention-giving behavior or what Goffman calls *audience segregation*, thus leaving the visitor with the feeling that he and his child were important—the ultimate compliment to any person. She showed the magnet program and school at its best, what Goffman called *idealization*.

It is worth noting with regard to entrance rituals that one of the first things hotel workers are told is that eye contact is a necessary behavior for greeting guests when they arrive at the hotel (Kleinfeld, 1989). Such contact communicates your willingness to go out of your way to help persons entering the setting, and it says you are risking a certain kind of vulnerability on their behalf.

It has always been interesting to me to watch some leaders use smiles and other nonverbal behaviors to relax persons entering a setting. They also exhibit the ability to establish a connection with so-called small talk. Leaders who are sensitive to entrance rituals quickly read a situation and go the extra mile to help others. I recently had a very difficult, bad-weather flight from Atlanta to Boston. The clerk at the reception desk registered me in a bureaucratic, on-automatic-pilot way. I walked to a chair in the lobby, obviously shaken and tired from my difficult flight. An assistant manager of the hotel, who read my body language, asked me if she could get me coffee or a drink. I smiled and asked if she had any cranberry juice. She went to the kitchen and returned with a large bottle of cranberry juice. From my vantage point as a traveler who had faced bitter cold, snow, and a challenging flight, she seemed like an angel. Interestingly enough, one of the first things I did when returning home was to go to my notes from this trip, find her name and the address of the hotel, and write to the CEO of the hotel chain with a copy to the manager and assistant manager. She went the extra mile and deserved positive recognition for doing so.

Leaders who give attention to entrance rituals know the importance of the physical setting. For example, one school principal inherited a high counter that served as a barrier between guests and the secretary. The counter was removed to facilitate exchange of ideas and feelings. Another principal instructed secretaries and student assistants to begin conversations with guests by saying, "Welcome to *our* school. How may I help you?"

A good energy level on the part of the greeter is important, but it is not sufficient in itself. Guests want to know that school leaders have a sense of purpose so that children and adults will be involved in meaningful activity. A clear and concise vision statement communicates this sense of direction: "Everything we do here is aimed at helping children and adults become the best they can be." This general vision statement can be followed by more specific goals for the school. These statements are of little value if their owners can't share them with visitors in their conversations during normal school activity.

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Goffman's use of the word *decorum* is helpful as we think of entrance rituals. The principal, secretary, receptionist, or teacher should know that visitors are influenced by the way in which school people comport themselves "while in visual or aural range . . . but not necessarily engaged in talk with them" (Goffman, 1959, p. 107). It is fascinating to simply sit in a chair in the school office and listen to the way in which adults relate to each other and the students. It is in such situations that the unobtrusive guest hears comments that reflect what Goffman calls *treatment of the absent*. Teachers and secretaries will make comments about colleagues and students who are not within earshot. High school student assistants' remarks are especially interesting when the outside observer is within aural range.

Exit rituals are as important as entrance rituals. (It is worth noting that many religious services have both a processional and recessional—the entrance of the choir and clerics and their exit.) A major purpose of the exit ritual is to leave the participants, especially visitors, with the feeling that what they have experienced is worthwhile. The principal and other educators in the school who walk parents and other guests to the door have the opportunity to prolong their conversation and demonstrate their care for the guests. It is an opportunity to summarize what has happened during the visit, thank visitors for their interest in the children and the school, and invite them back for another visit. It is during exit rituals that principals are reminded that "there is no more loyal guest than one who has a problem that gets fixed" (Kleinfield, 1989, p. 32). Luxury hotel surveys have also revealed time and again "that guests very much like being called by name" (Kleinfield, 1989, p. 35). A certain distanced respect is usually communicated with the use of Mr. and Ms. unless the host or hostess is on a first-name basis with the guest.

With regard to exit rituals, it is also important to remember that the way you, the leader, leave is often the way you will be remembered (Woodward, 1999). I recently heard two speeches by university presidents on the same afternoon at the same site—a university's auditorium. The first president gave a fine speech based on his knowledge of philosophical

issues as applied to everyday challenges in higher education. The second speaker gave an acceptable, but not outstanding speech. It was delivered in a personable and caring manner. The two men left the speakers' platform at the same time. The first speaker hurriedly moved down the aisle without acknowledging persons on either side of the aisle. The second speaker spent a half hour or so talking to, listening to, and sharing his warmth with interested persons on both sides of the aisle. I was somewhat surprised at the luncheon that followed when conversation after conversation centered on the warm and caring leadership of the second speaker. The first speaker's love for ideas was no substitute for a caring exit ritual.

Listening

The two snapshots that follow take you, the reader, backstage into the lives of two leaders, one who is a poor listener and the other who is a good listener. You will see from these snapshots how important listening can be in establishing your credibility as a leader. Snapshot 1.3 portrays a distracted principal who is a poor listener. Snapshot 1.4 introduces us to a principal whose true listening ability is a real source of power.

Snapshot 1.3 Portrait of a High Flyer

Jeff was identified as a "high flyer" from the time he was named an assistant principal. He knew how to get and keep the attention of the superintendent and board of education. He was definitely going places in a hurry.

After a year as assistant principal, he was promoted to a principalship in what was considered an excellent school. The one problem that many educators in the system associated with Jeff was his poor listening. If you were talking with him in a public setting, Jeff was always looking over your shoulder to see if he should be talking with someone else—a person with more power and higher status. It was really quite embarrassing, for Jeff would abruptly end the conversation and bolt toward the more important person.

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Snapshot 1.4 Portrait of a True Listener

Dwight was an articulate, well-dressed principal who was liked by everyone. He was one of the most personable and social persons in the school system.

Somewhere along the line, Dwight had learned the value of true listening. When principals in the urban school system met with spouses or friends at social gatherings, Dwight always seemed to be in the middle of the action—listening and rarely talking.

When Dwight walked down the hall of his school, teachers, their assistants, and students would suddenly appear in order to talk to Dwight. He always seemed to have time to meet with them.

Listening is probably the most powerful table manner of leadership available to the educator. It is flattering to the speaker and it demonstrates that you aren't self-centered, but instead are eager to learn more about the person speaking. By focusing on the speaker you will also lessen your anxiety (Linver, 1978). By actively listening you will communicate that you understand where the speaker is coming from, and care enough about that person to step into his or her shoes (Linver, 1978). Make no mistake about it, listening is hard work—what M. Scott Peck has called a manifestation of love (Peck, 1978). It relies on the discipline of bracketing, "the temporary giving up or setting aside of one's own prejudices, frames of reference and desires" (Peck, 1978, p. 128). The true listener temporarily communicates total acceptance of the speaker, the result being that the person speaking will feel less threatened and will make himself or herself more vulnerable by telling you more (Peck, 1978). Richard Amme (2003a), media consultant, also reminds us that focusing our attention, a key to good listening, can be achieved by leaning forward and looking directly into the eyes of the person talking. This will keep your mind from wandering and encourage the speaker to say more.

One of the driving forces that can help each of us become true listeners is our desire to learn more about the person speaking and the subject of the conversation. The good listener, therefore, often stimulates conversation by asking a good question.

The true listener understands the power of seeing self as learner. It is important to add that listening has both a personal face and an organizational face. The true listener can personally profit from the experience, and the organization will also benefit from what the listener has learned and the good organizational impression this makes on the speaker(s). In Goffman's words, true listening is *dramatic realization*, for the listener has mobilized his or her activity to demonstrate that the leader and organization care about learning and the ideas of others (Goffman, 1959). Goffman believes that a member of a *team* uses listening as a way to help others see that cooperation is essential and the task to be performed is more important than the characteristics of the performer (Goffman, 1959). Sarason (1972) also highlights the value of listening as learning communities are created.

Jeff's narcissism and intense drive for a higher position, as described in Snapshot 1.3, may well lead to political payoff but at a price to others and himself: "Politicians strike me as a lonely crowd, making few deep friendships because almost every relationship is tainted by the calculus of power: How will this help me?" (Smith, 1988, p. 92). Dwight, on the other hand, may well achieve a higher position but at a slower rate. My guess is that he will enjoy the journey more and find the love of learning a lifelong benefit.

Avoiding Cognitive Distortions

Distortions in our thinking may occur as we listen and interpret what we hear and don't hear. The secret is to identify these distortions so that we don't act them out. David Burns (1980), author of *Feeling Good*, has identified ten cognitive distortions:

1. *All-or-nothing thinking* refers to your "tendency to evaluate your personal qualities in extreme, black-or-white categories" (Burns, 1980, p. 31). A disappointed candidate for a principalship demonstrated this cognitive fallacy: "Because I didn't get the principalship, I know I just don't have what it takes."

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2. *Overgeneralization* is to “arbitrarily conclude that one thing that happened to you once will occur over and over again” (Burns, 1980, p. 32). A newly appointed assistant principal shared her disappointment in leading her first seminar at a nearby university: “This is the first and last time I am going to teach university students. I was a good university student but I am no professor.”

3. A *mental filter* is in place when “you pick out a negative detail in any situation and dwell on it exclusively, thus perceiving that the whole situation is negative” (Burns, 1980, p. 33). A newly appointed principal said, “I have a lot of left-brained people on my faculty. The one time I tried a more right-brained approach to curriculum leadership it didn’t work. I don’t want to take a chance on using this new approach again.”

4. *Disqualifying the positive* takes place when “you don’t just ignore positive experiences, you cleverly and swiftly turn them into their nightmarish opposite” (Burns, 1980, p. 34). “Thanks for the compliment about my leadership, but you’re just being nice” is an example of this kind of cognitive distortion.

5. *Jumping to conclusions* exists when “you automatically jump to a conclusion that is not justified by the facts of the situation” (Burns, 1980, p. 35). This is a kind of *mind reading* because “you make the assumption that other people are looking down on you and you’re so convinced about this that you don’t even bother to check it out” (Burns, 1980, p. 35). A teacher-leader said, “I know that our school can’t implement this new, broader definition of ‘curriculum’ because the faculty simply won’t buy it.”

6. *Magnification and minimization* occur when “you are either blowing things up out of proportion or shrinking them” (Burns, 1980, p. 36). “If our faculty sends this e-mail to the superintendent, she will think I’m a terrible principal” is an example of magnification. “The superintendent won’t even notice this e-mail from the faculty, she is so busy” demonstrates minimization.

7. *Emotional reasoning* exists when “you take your emotions as evidence of the truth” (Burns, 1980, p. 37): “I really feel guilty

about not being a curriculum leader in the principalship. I know I should be more involved in curriculum and instruction." One problem with this cognitive distortion is that you don't just get on with being a curriculum leader but instead wallow in the guilt.

8. *Should statements* are an attempt to "try to motivate yourself by saying, 'I should do this or that'" (Burns, 1980, p. 37). "I should be a better speaker at parent-teacher meetings" serves as an example. These statements once again lead to one's simply being stuck in guilt.

9. *Labeling and mislabeling* create "a completely negative self-image based on your errors" (Burns, 1980, p. 38). I have often heard school and school-system leaders say, "I never have been a scholar. I'm an administrator—a people person." This kind of cognitive distortion narrowly defines the role of the scholar.

10. *Personalization* confuses "influence with control over others" (Burns, 1980, p. 39). "I never will forgive myself for letting a parent throw a pie in the superintendent's face at our school carnival," said an elementary-school principal. The superintendent took this unexpected event in stride and knew that the principal couldn't have controlled the situation anyway.

All of these cognitive distortions have their holders "paying interest on a debt they don't owe" and in the process wasting personal and professional resources that could be better allocated elsewhere. Educational leaders who have used this ten-point framework find it useful both in school and out-of-school matters, such as friendship and marriages. Several of these leaders have used the framework in giving workshops for educators and parents involved in school and school-system matters.

Speaking

Effective speaking is a major table manner of leadership—one that is given too little attention in most of the formal

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coursework offered by colleges and universities in general and teacher and administrator preparation programs in particular. Yet it is precisely this table manner of leadership that establishes or fails to establish a leader's credibility. The following snapshot demonstrates the struggle a leader had in achieving comfort and competence as a public speaker. (See Appendix K for an exercise on how focusing on the message relieves nervousness.)

Snapshot 1.5 Challenge of Learning to Speak Well

Lee came from a family that valued informal conversations, but she shied away from formal speaking opportunities. Part of this shyness was because Lee's older sister was known for her speaking ability in a variety of school and university settings. Her sister was president of the senior class and valedictorian.

Lee also believed that her informal speaking ability had to be distinctly different from what was called for in more formal settings. She was wary of standing behind a podium and using a microphone and therefore used a number of excuses to avoid such situations.

Lee's leadership skills were recognized by a principal who became her mentor and outspoken advocate. As a result, Lee moved through the ranks from teacher to teacher-leader to assistant principal to principal of a large high school. Lee knew that she would face many public speaking opportunities and challenges if she moved ahead into superintendent positions—something that she screwed her courage up enough to discuss with her mentor.

Her mentor convinced Lee that she could use her informal speaking style in formal situations. She could be wired with a microphone and didn't have to stand behind the podium. In fact, her willingness to move toward the audience could be seen as an asset rather than a liability.

As Lee experimented with her new freedom to be herself in formal situations, she gained a sense of comfort and confidence and wondered why during all of these years she had so narrowly defined her role as a speaker. She referred to this as paying interest on a debt she didn't owe.

Speaking is a critical communicative skill that can be important in learning more about yourself and others—much as it was for Lee in the snapshot. How significant is this skill in comparison to writing? Sandy Linver (1978), author of the best-selling book *Speakeasy*, answers this question: “The way we interact with other people—both personally and professionally, has little to do with the written word. It is almost totally based on speaking” (p. 18).

There is no one right speaking style, as the snapshot of Lee demonstrates. It therefore makes sense that the starting place is to know what kind of person you basically are.

Please take a moment to complete the following self-inventory. It will give you a start in assessing your *comfort* and *proficiency* as a speaker.

How Good and Comfortable Are You as a Public Speaker?

Please assess your comfort and proficiency on the following items, from 1 (low) to 5 (high):

Comfort Proficiency

1. Speaking one-to-one
2. Answering questions one-to-one
3. Speaking to a small group
4. Answering questions after speaking to a small group
5. Speaking to a large group
6. Answering questions after speaking to a large group
7. Telephone interviews
8. Radio interviews
9. Television interviews at the station
10. Television interviews in the field
11. Newspaper reporter interviews

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Are you more comfortable relating to people in formal or informal situations? If your style is more formal, use a podium and stick rather closely to your detailed notes or written speech. If your style is more informal, as with Lee in the snapshot, leave the lectern and move into the audience as if you were having a conversation. Once again, draw on your “honesty and courage to be authentic with your audience and project to them who you really are” (Linver, 1978, p. 59). Remember that Goffman (1959) reserved the term *sincere* for persons “who believe in the impression fostered by their own performance” (p. 18). A person is cynical if he doesn’t believe in his own performances and isn’t concerned with his audience’s beliefs (Goffman, 1959). One of the best examples of authentic responses was reported in *Time* magazine on January 4, 1993 (p. 55). Television brought the devastation of the Los Angeles riots into every living room, and an unsophisticated man, Rodney King, stepped before the camera and said, “Can we all get along?” It was the TV moment of the year.

Regardless of your style, the secret is to focus on the audience, rather than yourself, and share your warmth with them. One good way to focus on the audience is to think about how curious you are to learn more about them and their reactions to your ideas. You will discover that “it’s this desire for contact, to make something happen, that gives a speaker energy” (Linver, 1978, p. 41). One way to share your warmth is to share your sense of humor. This has the effect of relaxing the audience, whether it is one person or 100.

My father attended a college alumni meeting in Sarasota, Florida, hundreds of miles away from his alma mater, Albion College, in Michigan. The speaker was the president of the college. My father called me after the speech and raved about the president. “Why did you like him so much?” I asked. He responded, “He talked to me *before* the speech about my personal interests in the college and he listened to what I had to say.” In short, the president set the stage for his own success before he even spoke a word in the more formal setting. The

impression that he made on an alumnus remained in this person's mind as he sat in the audience listening to the college president's speech.

The physical setting in which you speak sets the stage for your speaking. In both formal and informal settings, it can be useful to have a mental checklist. For example, remove distractions, such as a gurgling coffeepot; have chairs and/or tables arranged the way you want them; assess acoustics and check equipment; and have a résumé for the person who is introducing you. Goffman refers to such matters as *expressive control*. Your preparation sends the message, "I care enough about you, the audience, to have done my homework." Good preparation also gives you, the speaker, a sense of security.

You will naturally be nervous to some extent before speaking in many situations. Treat this nervousness as a good thing, for it means that you care enough about the audience and yourself to get psyched up for the occasion. Self-talk can be helpful as you prepare: "Good going. I have an edge on and I know that this is necessary in order to do a good job." It is especially helpful to realize that the audience wants you to succeed and is therefore with you from the start. Success breeds success. The challenge is to be interesting to your audience *and* yourself. When you meet this challenge you will experience one of the feelings associated with success: You and the audience will have an interest connection, a sense of oneness.

Twenty years ago I started giving leadership seminars across the country and didn't have much of a clue as to what worked and what didn't. I also didn't know how to deal with my nervousness and excessive energy. As a result, it often felt as if my wheels were spinning. With time, the following learnings gave me enough energy to convey my desire to be with the audience without having so much energy that it made the audience, and therefore me, too nervous.

First, I always wanted to see and therefore experience the physical setting where the seminar would be held the night before it took place. Size of the room, kind of seats, seating

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arrangements, audiovisual equipment, electrical outlets, flip charts to write on, acoustics, sound from the rooms next door, lighting, and location of bathrooms were important considerations. This gave me the opportunity to work with hotel managers to avoid problems and, perhaps more important, I could clearly see an image of the seminar room ten hours or so before the daylong seminar would take place. On one occasion about five years into my seminars on leadership, I was asked to speak to a small group the night before the main event the next day. It was basically a book autographing party. At the end of this evening speech, I asked any participants who were planning to attend the next day's seminar to meet with me for a few minutes. A simple question addressed to this group turned a brief session into an hour's discussion: "What do you like and not like about leadership seminars you have experienced in your career?" One participant's response was unanimously supported by the other ten people in this gathering:

I am tired of speakers who simply entertain us with a "dog and pony show." These speakers are "show dogs" who seem to be less interested in the subject matter than they are with their own inflated egos. *We hope that you will engage us with the subject matter tomorrow.*

After hearing this request, I was shaking in my boots. I had spent five years sharpening my leadership seminar presentation of self and with each year the end-of-seminar evaluations of my presentation got higher and higher. I knew that my only hope for success in meeting my small group's advice was to pull an all-nighter to rework the seminar for the next day. I sat down at my hotel-room desk and became completely engaged with the subject matter for the next day's seminar and how this change in focus would speak to the audience. It was more important to get behind the eyes of the participants than it was to feed my own ego and get high end-of-seminar evaluation grades. There were several results of this change

of focus in the seminar the next day. My presentation of self was less slick—indeed even clumsy at times—and I had less confidence than I would have had if following the established way of doing things. At the same time, my inner compass gave me the good feeling of knowing that I was more on track with the students' needs and desires. Evaluations for the seminar yielded lower numerical scores. I would have given myself a C+ at best in spite of my increased effort. A real benefit with time was that by focusing less on myself I saw myself as part of a much larger and more important matter—the learning setting and opportunities for participants *and* me to learn and grow. This perspective eventually led to decreased nervousness as a seminar leader.

The second thing I learned to do in preparation for leadership seminars was to set up a desk area in my hotel room so that I had a working area in my home away from home. Books and photocopied seminar materials were spread out on the desk and any table space available. Further preparation for the seminar presentation could be done in this study area. I reminded myself that having a passion for the subject matter of the seminar was the key factor in achieving success the next day. Early in my seminar-leading career, I discovered that I would probably wake up during the night in anticipation of the next day's events. At first, I tried to force myself to go back to sleep, but it soon became clear that it was better simply to move to my study area and further prepare for the next day. After an hour or so, my nervousness subsided, thanks to immersion in subject matter, and I would sleep reasonably well. In the event that I was doing a seminar in my hometown, I simply used my home study area as an oasis to prepare for the next day's seminar.

Third, several years into my seminar's presentation, I began to understand the power of anecdotes and stories. From the time I was a young child, the subject matter of my life was observing other people—often in humorous situations. Interestingly enough, these stories began making their way into my seminar presentations to illustrate points being made.

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At first, it was somewhat of a surprise to me to hear positive audience reaction to these stories. With each telling of a story, greater precision of emphasis and word choice emerged. It was almost as if the stories carried the seminars from point to point. Motivated by this knowledge, I became more observant in airports, shopping malls, religious gatherings, and university settings. All of these situations provided grist for the mill of my speaking and writing.

Fourth, it was important to get to the seminar room the next morning at least two hours in advance of the seminar presentation. This gave me a chance to get chairs and tables in place, audiovisual equipment in working order, handouts in front of each chair, and the like. It was also a good time to greet as many participants as possible to establish an affinity connection and lessen my nervousness. Fifth, and finally, I reminded myself that I was an important part, but only a part, of the seminar activities. Many others participated in the preparation for this event—including those who invited me, the hotel management and staff, and especially the participants who invested their time and money to attend the seminar. “I have done all that I can to this point, seminars have been successful in the past, and the audience wants this to be a good day or they wouldn’t have invited me and attended the seminar,” I said to myself.

One of the advantages speaking has over writing is that you get immediate reaction to your ideas. Since much of communication is nonverbal body language, you will be able to read your audience and know how your ideas are being received. As you share your warmth with them, they will share their warmth with you. Speaking situations also give you the opportunity to revise ideas while you are on your feet—a kind of artistry in action.

It must be added that principals and other educational administrators sometimes experience a school or educational setting in crisis and a reporter arrives to interview the leader about a dangerous, controversial, or devastating issue that calls for a calm and concerned response. You must realize that you

and the reporter have different agendas. You want your school system, your school, and yourself to look good, but the reporter is focused on the abnormal. In fact, the reporter's career depends on getting the unusual story's details "wall to wall." Not only that, but the reporter is racing against other reporters to get the story first (Amme, 2003c).

It is important that you know the message you want to send. This message must focus first and foremost on the parents' primary concern: "Is my child safe?" A high school had a series of incidents that brought media attention to its campus: Two teachers had sexual relations with students over a period of several months, fights broke out in the school over racial issues, and athletes were kicked off of teams for drug use. The principal articulated his message several times during interviews: "We vow to keep your children safe!" The next day's newspaper headlines read, SCHOOL VOWS TO PROTECT ITS STUDENTS! This high school principal was also wise to respond in a timely manner. Some educators wait too long to respond, hoping that the controversial matter will go away.

It is important when managing a crisis that internal communication within the school and school system be given a good deal of attention, rather than simply focusing on external communication. One school system blanketed audiences within the school system with e-mails, letters, and phone calls after an incident and then also put information concerning the controversial issue on the Internet. Their crisis management consultant told me that 80 percent of their communication was internal because he believed that each educator within the school system was a significant voice who could influence persons outside of the school system. He also advised educators being interviewed to be able to articulate a genuine apology when appropriate, as this would take the wind out of the reporter's sails.

Dealing with all of these matters affords the leader the opportunity to gain experience that will be invaluable in future decision-making situations.

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Because more and more educators are expected to go on television, the following list of guidelines may be useful to you in meeting this challenge:

1. Talk to the reporter, not the camera or microphone. Look the reporter straight in the eye.
2. Stand or sit erectly. Don't stoop or bend over.
3. If you say "No comment," add that you will get back to the reporter by such and such a time.
4. Know who you're dealing with and develop rapport with the reporter when possible.
5. Remember that the good photographer (camera person) doesn't necessarily have the camera to his or her eye. The camera can be rolling from any position, even if it is under his or her arm.
6. Be politely on your guard all of the time.
7. Take advantage of nonconfrontational "good news" programs.
8. The bottom line is to meet reporters head-on and be honest. The camera doesn't lie. It will see your eyes.
9. Be cool and confident. It disarms reporters.
10. Remember that there is a high degree of sensitivity about minorities and women at this time in the history of our nation.
11. A smile is the most disarming thing in the world. Bring to the camera the real person inside you.
12. Be prepared. If you don't know, say, "I don't know."
13. There is no such thing as "off the record." Beware of the reporter who says, "This is off the record."
14. You can ask to talk to the reporter about something before you go on camera. If the reporter won't allow you to do this, don't proceed with the interview.

15. It is a good idea to suggest a place for the interview. Get an appropriate visual backdrop.
16. Watch hazards around you. Don't swivel in a chair. Don't fidget. Calm down, even if it means that you grab a desk in front of you or behind you.
17. Take your time.
18. Ask to reshoot if you are extremely dissatisfied with the interview.
19. Limit the number of remarks and focus on two or three major points.
20. Ask the reporter not only who he or she has already talked to, but who else will be talked to before this story is over.
21. You can occasionally stop a reporter dead in his or her tracks by saying, "I have no earthly idea what you're talking about."
22. Be alert to the fact that some reporters may practice the "'wouldn't you say' school of journalism" (Schieffer, 2003, p. 51). A reporter may ask, "Would you say that your school has serious security problems?" If you even nod yes, you may well be quoted as saying, "The principal says his school has serious security problems!"
23. The school or central office is "private" property. Be aware, however, that television cameras can "shoot" onto your property from a nearby site without your permission.

All of these suggestions are examples of what Goffman calls *impression management* (Goffman, 1959). Familiarity with television interviews will be enhanced as you have more and more experiences with reporters. How does one get better and better at this? Practice . . . practice . . . practice. "Winston Churchill

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was asked what he did in his spare time. He responded, "I rehearse my extemporaneous speeches" (Adams, 1983, p. 229).

Writing

Writing affords you another vehicle or tool for communicating with parents and others interested in schools and school systems. Time and time again, parents share with others memos, letters, e-mails, and newsletters from the principal's office that have serious spelling and grammatical errors. Teachers' comments on student papers also sometimes have such errors. Parents ask, "How can they teach good writing when they don't know what good writing is?"

Correct spelling and grammar are important table manners of leadership. Because we all make spelling and grammatical errors at times, the secret is to have a proficient copy editor who will proofread your memos and the like. It takes extra effort and time to use a proofreader, but many an embarrassing moment can be avoided by such effort.

An important question to ask in sending an e-mail, letter, or memorandum is, "What is my purpose in doing this?" This purpose should be clearly stated, with concrete next steps spelled out concisely and precisely, so that colleagues, parents, or other adults know what they are expected to do after reading the communication. In the event that you want to expedite such a response, ask for it (with an e-mail) or include a stamped, self-addressed envelope with a memo or letter.

Finally, send clean copy. Poorly typed communications and badly photocopied materials send the message that you are sloppy and unprofessional.

Writing affords the teacher leader, principal, central-office leader, and superintendent the opportunity to "stimulate reflective thinking" (Gordon, 2004, p. 149). Many administrators have attended seminars where doing autobiography and journaling are used to think through and then express the patterns and principles in their professional experiences (see Appendices A and C). The "know thyself" dimension of professional development helps the educational leader construct

meaning—the foundation of understanding from which emerge the leader's core values.

Miscellaneous Table Manners of Leadership

More traditional methods of communication, such as the telephone, as well as modern methods like e-mails and voice mails afford the educational leader the opportunity to use the table manners of leadership. The following guidelines may be useful to you as a leader:

1. When leaving a message on voice mail or a telephone answering machine, state your name, telephone number, nature of the business, and the best time to return the call. *State this information slowly.* Remember, the person listening to your request is writing the information down.
2. Before meeting with other persons or having important phone conversations, prepare for the content of the conversation, even if this means writing notes from which you speak.
3. Always give your full name when making a phone call. Some people begin speaking and the other party has no idea who it is.
4. There are two major ways to assure you that you can do something with the support of your "bureaucratic superiors": (a) remove irritants and (b) be willing to share the credit if efforts are successful, and share the blame if they are not. Many of the irritants that arise emerge from problems associated with e-mails and telephone conversations. Attention to seemingly insignificant matters can pay rich dividends in the long run.
5. When substantive agreements are arrived at over the telephone, follow up with an e-mail or memo of understanding, concluding with, "Unless I hear from you otherwise, I'll assume this is correct."

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6. Log important contacts with other parties.
7. Choose your “battles” carefully. Don’t sweat the small stuff. To do so makes you run the risk of goal displacement. Your original, important goals are displaced by minor matters.

Note: See Appendix L for guidelines on the table manners of graduate school leadership. These guidelines may help graduate students avoid the many pitfalls facing them.

CONCLUDING ADVICE FROM A POLITICAL PROFESSIONAL

Robert Reich (1997), Secretary of Labor in the first Clinton administration, has written a fascinating book titled *Locked in the Cabinet*. It is one of the finest books I have read on the presentation of self and leadership in large institutions, in this case largely political ones. Secretary Reich was given a list of tips by his advance man, Ken Sain, a veteran of many political campaigns. Sain referred to this as his *muck list*, by which he meant his “to do list” for people who are high muckety-mucks—in this case, a list for Reich as a cabinet member:

First, you must immediately hand off all briefcases, luggage, tote bags, and carryalls. A muck doesn’t carry bags. *Second*, you must go directly through doorways without waiting for others to go first. The *third* principle is you walk quickly, with head held high and back straight. A muck always looks like he’s late for a meeting with the President. *Fourth*, always wear suits that are pressed, shirts freshly cleaned and pressed, and shoes that are shined. *Fifth*, get in the camera shot. No use looking like a muck if they don’t see you. There’s one exception that I’ll get to in a moment. *Sixth*, when you’re invited to give a speech, always arrive in the nick of time. Better yet, be a few minutes late. A muck lets his host *worry* just a bit.

Seventh, when you've finished speaking, *don't* sit down at the head table. You'll have to listen to the other speakers. A muck doesn't listen to other speakers unless they outrank him. Leave immediately, or work the room and then exit. *Eighth*, when you work a room, spend no more than five seconds per handshake. Grab their hand before they grab yours, so that you're in control of the grip and can quickly move on. Make eye contact but maintain peripheral vision so you know where you're heading. *Ninth*, when walking in public with the President or Vice President, trail slightly behind them—even when they're talking to you. When they're making a speech, stand behind and to the side and look as though you're interested in every word. Never get in *their* camera shot. A muck always shows respect to higher mucks. The *tenth* and final rule of muck-dom is the most important. Whenever in public—in an airport, on the street, wherever—always look *cool*. Don't frown. Don't clown. Don't be down. A true muck is always in charge. (pp. 126–127)

Robert Reich told Ken Sain that it would take him years to learn all of this, after which Sain said that he would get the hang of it and then face the biggest challenge of all: “Unlearning it when you leave the cabinet” (p. 127). Sain laughed. Sain's list for being a successful cabinet member was vintage Goffman—a set of presentation-of-self principles for a particular role.

We would do well to remind ourselves that all forms of communication are promissory activities (Goffman, 1959). We promise that we will act out what we have said we will do.

BARRIERS TO CREATING A CULTURE OF CIVILITIES

We could strike up a conversation with almost any educator on the importance of civilities and there would be mutual agreement as to their importance in the culture of settings and

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organizations. The expression of simply kindnesses would mean something to participants in this conversation because we have experienced the differences such civilities have made in our lives. I have had such conversations, and we always tell stories of how this person or that did something that made life a little better for us. There is a feeling of goodness and warmth as the stories are told and heard. Why is it, then, that so little attention is given to the civilities of leadership in so many settings?

A story will make clear that this problem is real, after which the barriers to the exercise of civilities in institutions are identified and discussed. During my career, I have had the opportunity to participate in three distance-education doctoral programs in three universities. The setting for the following story is a large, private university whose doctoral program for educational administrators began in January 1972. The nontraditional nature of the program brought immediate and sustained criticism in professional and popular publications. A major factor in countering credibility issues was the fact that the university's faculty of prominent national lecturers would fly in to cluster sites across the nation to conduct a daylong seminar. Although there was a lack of sustained contact with the lecturers, students and the university could claim an adjunct faculty of nationally recognized researchers, scholars, and successful veteran superintendents.

I gave my first lecture for this university in the spring of 1983 as a substitute for a prominent curriculum theorist who became ill with a kidney disease. During the next 12 years I served as a faculty member, followed by eight years as both faculty member and study area head, a position known as senior national lecturer. In spite of sometimes difficult travel considerations, largely due to poor flying weather, the opportunity to take ideas to different parts of the country was both challenging and rewarding. Doctoral students' reactions to the lectures were very helpful in sharpening ideas for my book and article writing. I also became a part of a community of educators interested in leadership education.

In the past couple of years, the doctoral program described previously has undergone major restructuring, with much of its instruction going online. At the end of the 2002–2003 academic year, I joined ten colleagues who left the study area in which we had taught—the largest exodus of faculty members from a study area in the history of the doctoral program. I was one of a majority in this group who not only left the study area but also left the doctoral program as a whole. And now I come to the point of this story, a point that focuses on civilities and exit rituals. None of the 11 people were given as much as a simple, “Thank you for your years of service to the study area and/or doctoral program.” In reviewing my numerous files of e-mails, letters, and student evaluations over a 20-year period, I have asked myself and colleagues in higher education and school administration, “How could this happen?” It is their responses that I found most interesting for they speak to barriers to creating a culture of civilities.

Busyness. A superintendent friend who, when told the story above, replied:

You need to not take this situation personally. Administrators are overwhelmed with busyness. Most people want to climb the ladder of success in administration only to find that they constantly raise the ladder. When you get in the higher positions, you realize that large institutions are never picnics. They are like the ants without the picnics. People constantly harass you with problems that consume your resources.

While in my waning days with the distance-education doctoral program, I sent an e-mail to a high-ranking administrator expressing my appreciation for positive contributions made. The administrator responded at the end of the day from a hotel out West. I was thanked for such a positive message as it was the only positive response to a long list of e-mails.

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The lesson learned was that the person I expected a thank you from had received no thank yous that day. The lack-of-civilities problem was one that permeated the culture of the institution. How can you give what you don't get?

Present and Future Focus. A university professor, upon hearing my story, replied,

I'm not surprised. You and your colleagues who left the study area were history. Most institutions in the United States, particularly distance-education programs, find history annoying. It eats up resources that detract from the problems of today and tomorrow.

This professor reminded me that entrance rituals are much more fun than exit rituals. Saying "hello" is much more promising than "good-bye." Attention to the past is a special problem for newly appointed administrators who have not experienced the study area's past. Although the newly appointed head of the distance-education program introduced some important entrance rituals in order to assess the state of things, the spirit and letter of such measures were quickly set aside when mandated changes were introduced. The program head and newly appointed study area heads focused on the new and improved, "restructuring" as they called it, for they had no investment in the history of the distance-education program. Both a stated vision and rationale for changes were either missing or inadequate.

Arrogance. Robert Reich (1997) suggests that his "Pronoun Test" be used to gauge the culture of an institution (p. 110). Do people refer to "they" and "them" or do they describe the institution as "we" and "us"? As more and more noise entered the distance-education program, there were more references to outside sources that mandated changes without explanation and without the input of those on the firing line—the faculty and mid-level administrators. People who liked the

head of the distance-education program saw the source of the mandated changes as the provost. Those who didn't like or understand the head of the program saw the head and provost as one and the same. Some administrators were considered arrogant in their deliberations with faculty. Some faculty members cited this as a major reason for leaving the study areas. Because administrators didn't conduct exit rituals with faculty who left, they were in the dark with regard to such matters.

CONCLUSION

The table manners of leadership are a combination of attitudes, skills, and tools designed to help the educational leader achieve intended outcomes as well as outcomes that emerge from interactions with others. The table manners of leadership can facilitate civil discourse—an essential part of professionalism. Simple kindnesses or civilities can make a difference as we work together in creating learning settings.

It is easy to discount table manners of leadership as simple technical skills, but to do so is a mistake. The most powerful of moral messages frequently contain artistry and clarity of thought. They demonstrate that the speaker or writer has given attention to the details of communication—a compliment to the listener or reader.

Finally, the biggest enemy of many educational leaders is their constant need to be the center of attention in order to have their egos fed. A colleague, coauthor, and friend, Larry Coble, cited former University of North Carolina President William Friday as an example of a leader with fine table manners of leadership. Friday, although incredibly smooth, has an uncanny ability to shift the focal point of attention to the other person(s) when he interacts. He never fails to show his genuine interest and concern through his interpersonal skills while many other leaders project themselves as know-it-alls.

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